



Edith Throckmorton **(1901-1982)**

Civil rights and community leader, educator, teacher, principal. President of the Montgomery County Chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) for 16 years

Edith Throckmorton was born in Summit Point, West Virginia in 1901. She moved to Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, where her family purchased a small farm, and where she attended school. She graduated with a B.A. in education from Shippensburg State College, Pennsylvania, in 1930. She continued her education while teaching and pursued further study at the Universities of Boston, Pennsylvania, and Maine.

She began her teaching career in Calvert County, and continued in Frederick County, and Rocky Mount, North Carolina. She also served as principal of the Pine Street School in Cambridge, Maryland, from 1932 to 1934. She joined the Montgomery County Public Schools in the late 1930's becoming principal of several elementary schools: Selman, Sandy Springs, Emory Grove, and Laytonsville. She also became principal of Gaithersburg's Longview Elementary School when it opened in 1950. Longview housed the first kindergarten and special education classes for African-Americans in Montgomery County. It was also the first black school to join the Montgomery County and Maryland Congress of Parent Teacher Associations.

Throckmorton was involved with Montgomery County Public Schools for 25 years, 16 of them in a segregated system. After the 1954 U.S. Supreme Court desegregation decision, the County School Board began plans for integration in the fall of 1955. The County integrated its school system by closing the all-black schools and dispersing students and teachers around the county into formerly all-white schools. Black teachers and principals were systematically down-graded, being dismissed and demoted as they were moved to all-white schools. As principal of Longview Elementary School in 1959, Throckmorton was asked to return to classroom teaching under a white principal. She resigned as an act of protest, and even declined to attend her retirement party.

Throckmorton's commitment to equal opportunities for African-Americans in the County and to civil and human rights led her to pursue an active role in the Montgomery County Chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). In 1962, she became its president, a position that she held for 16 years. In this capacity, she worked effectively with local elected officials, organizations, churches, and citizens, garnering their support for civil rights. She also formed alliances with many white organizations and church groups to support the cause of civil rights. She undertook voter registration drives for African-Americans in 1964 after the federal Voters Rights Act was passed and led the fight to lower professional barriers to African-Americans at Montgomery College, in the fire and police forces and in other private and public sector administrative positions. She played a vital role in the enactment of the 1967 Montgomery County Fair Housing law, and was influential in securing a

public accommodations ordinance, and successfully advocated construction of low to moderate income housing for county residents. She also was instrumental in educating and registering voters, connecting African-Americans with job opportunities and calling attention to injustice. She helped establish the Human Relations Commission of the Montgomery County Government, and guided the County School Board through the founding of its first Human Relations Department.

After her retirement from the NAACP in 1977, Throckmorton continued to participate actively in local community organizations. Described as a calm, clear, articulate, and persuasive mind, Throckmorton was an active person driven by strong principles and convictions. "I always wanted to help people," she declared to a local newspaper in 1974. "I believe in results and I always wanted to improve people's lots and their ways of living." She participated in protests by picketing and sit-ins at restaurants and stores in Montgomery County. In 1963, she organized buses and private cars from Montgomery County to participate in the Martin Luther King March on Washington, D.C.

Over the course of her career, Throckmorton received many awards and citations for her outstanding service and dedication to the cause of civil rights. Among the many awards received were the Black Woman of the Year Award by Iota Upsilon Lambda Chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity in 1975 for her efforts to eliminate racial prejudice and discrimination; 1977 Resolution for Outstanding Leadership and Devoted Service from the Montgomery County Board of Education; 1977 Certificate of Appreciation for Service to Humanity from the Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc.; 1978 Plaque for Community Service from Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.; 1980 Plaque for Community Service from Focus on Women, Montgomery County; 1981 Unsung Heroine Service Award from the National Women's Conference, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People; 1981 Certificate for Outstanding Services to Senior Citizens from Montgomery County Government; and 1981 Certificate for Community Service from the Progressive Citizens' Organization of Lincoln Park.

Throckmorton died of cancer on February 21, 1982 in Rockville. A few months after her death, the Ken-Gar Civic Association of Kensington, Maryland, dedicated a park in her honor. Her collection of papers containing her entire teaching career and civil rights leadership is located in the Montgomery County Library Archives in Rockville.

SOURCES:

- The Montgomery County Historical Society Library
- Peerless Rockville